

By Mike Mallowe

# WHO KILLED KENNEDY? THE PHILADELPHIA CONNECTION

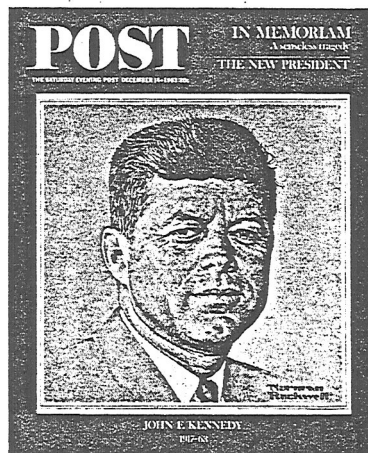
Over a score of local people have been involved in the assassination inquest.

They blew off the top of Jack Kennedy's head.

They nailed him in Dallas in Dealey Plaza on Friday, November 22nd, 1963 at 12:30 p.m., central standard time. They got him with a kill shot that would have brought down a buffalo.

They shattered that handsome Irish head like a squashed melon—chunks of his skull, flesh and hair, "impact debris" they would later call it, exploded in the damp Dallas air high above the motorcade, while the sticky, wet, vaporous gray matter of his brain misted grotesquely over the trunk of the limousine, over his widow, over the Governor of Texas and his wife, over a motorcycle cop directly behind the car and over spectators lining the pavement on the right side of Elm Street.

The Governor of Texas would later testify that the cool, gentle splash of the President's brain matter "felt like spent buckshot."



They forced Jacqueline Kennedy, covered with his blood and lost in the helplessness of her own hysteria, to crawl out over the back seat of the limousine and across the trunk to where a piece of her husband's head had come to rest.

They forced the Governor of Texas, wounded and bleeding himself, to reflexively flick a piece of Jack Kennedy's brain tissue, the size of a thumb nail, he would testify, off his trousers and onto the floor of the limousine.

They forced all of us, in a span of less than six seconds, to catch our breath and swallow hard and to stare in silence while our brains, too, seemed momentarily to stop functioning; our hearts to stop beating and our ears to stop hearing, while our skin tightened and our muscles tensed as our bodies—and our worlds—shivered in the chill of shock.

They forced us to witness and to relive for as long as each of us will ever live, the calculated,

cold-blooded, premeditated murder of Jack Kennedy. Not just the *assassination*, not just the noble, dignified, drums-and-caisson assumption of Jack Kennedy, body and soul, from this life into the next—into the marble, timeless hush of the National Archives and the manicured tranquility of Arlington; no, they forced us to stare into the abyss itself, and to participate in his bloody, messy, all too mundane murder on an asphalt blacktop in Dallas.

They forced us to acknowledge as a people and to feel, as a people, with the personal, stinging intimacy of sorrow that after this, after his murder, after they had blown off the top of Jack Kennedy's head, we would never, ever be the same again.

This much is known to be true—captured on the Zapruder film, sworn to by eyewitnesses, certified by a Presidential commission.

And that which is not known to be fact; that which is not guaranteed by the immutability of film or "impact debris"; but those things that an army of independent Senate and House investigators have labored, some ceaselessly, for 14 years to uncover; those things that the overwhelming weight of rational evidence points to; those things that every lead, every clue, every witness, living and dead, every declassified document, every censored memo, every grainy photo, every page of closed-door testimony, every expert opinion, every shred of ballistic or autopsy evidence and every deathbed statement agree on; those things are known as "the areas of convergence" concerning the assassination of Jack Kennedy; and those things are assumed to be true.

These areas of convergence tell every professional investigator still working for the Congress on the Kennedy case, and every one of us, too, for that matter, of conspiracy and betrayal and murder.

This Everest of evidence tells us that the assassins caught Jack Kennedy in a deadly, downward, front-to-rear cross-fire from elevated sniper positions in the same kind of ambush that had been tried unsuccessfully on Charles de Gaulle and Fidel Castro.

This evidence tells us that there were certainly two of them and maybe three of them and that they must have used the sniper's best friend—a variation of the classic physical law of triangulation, converging different projectiles from different angles at a slow-moving target in a predetermined kill zone.

This evidence tells us that they may have used semi-automatic weapons,

The period preceding the killing was an era of perpetual conspiracy by spies who would not or could not come in from the cold.

mounted with telescopic sites—first cousins to machine guns—and that they knew precisely the exact movements of the Presidential motorcade.

This evidence also tells us that they were the technicians—the field operatives, the "executive action team," the hit men—for a large, complex conspiracy with enough money, power and influence to see to it that a middle-level actor within that conspiracy and veteran U.S. intelligence agent named Lee Harvey Oswald, would be made a patsy and a scapegoat for the assassination in Dealey Plaza, and would himself shortly afterward be murdered by a Dallas mobster and probable co-conspirator, Jack Ruby.

The evidence tells us that they could, through either subversion or manipulation, so intimidate the U.S. government as to guarantee that the Warren Commission, described as "decent, honorable men doing a dirty, dishonorable job," would fashion a "pathetic, sloppy, self-contradictory document ... of the most improbable fantasy," covering up, allegedly for the sake of national security, the clear and present indications of conspiracy and multiple assassins.

And lastly, the evidence tells us that these conspirators, these men who, in the language of homicide detectives, had the means, motive and opportunity to murder Jack Kennedy, were linked together through countless common inextricable events, circumstances and people that pointed in three closely related directions—to the internecine politics of Cuban exiles outside of Castro's Cuba; to the CIA case officers and contract employees who organized these anti-Castro exiles into bands of assassins and terrorists, whose activities culminated in the unsuccessful Bay of Pigs invasion against Castro in 1961; and finally, to the Mafia Dons, expelled from their Havana casinos and denied their Cuban drug connections by Castro, who then worked in conjunction with the CIA and the exiles in several assassination attempts against the Cuban leader.

The volumes of evidence and the years of leg work, surveillance and research, plus the 23 murders, suicides and accidental deaths of witnesses to the assassination, or of participants in the investigation, tell us of a grim 1963 Cold War scenario of anger, vengeance

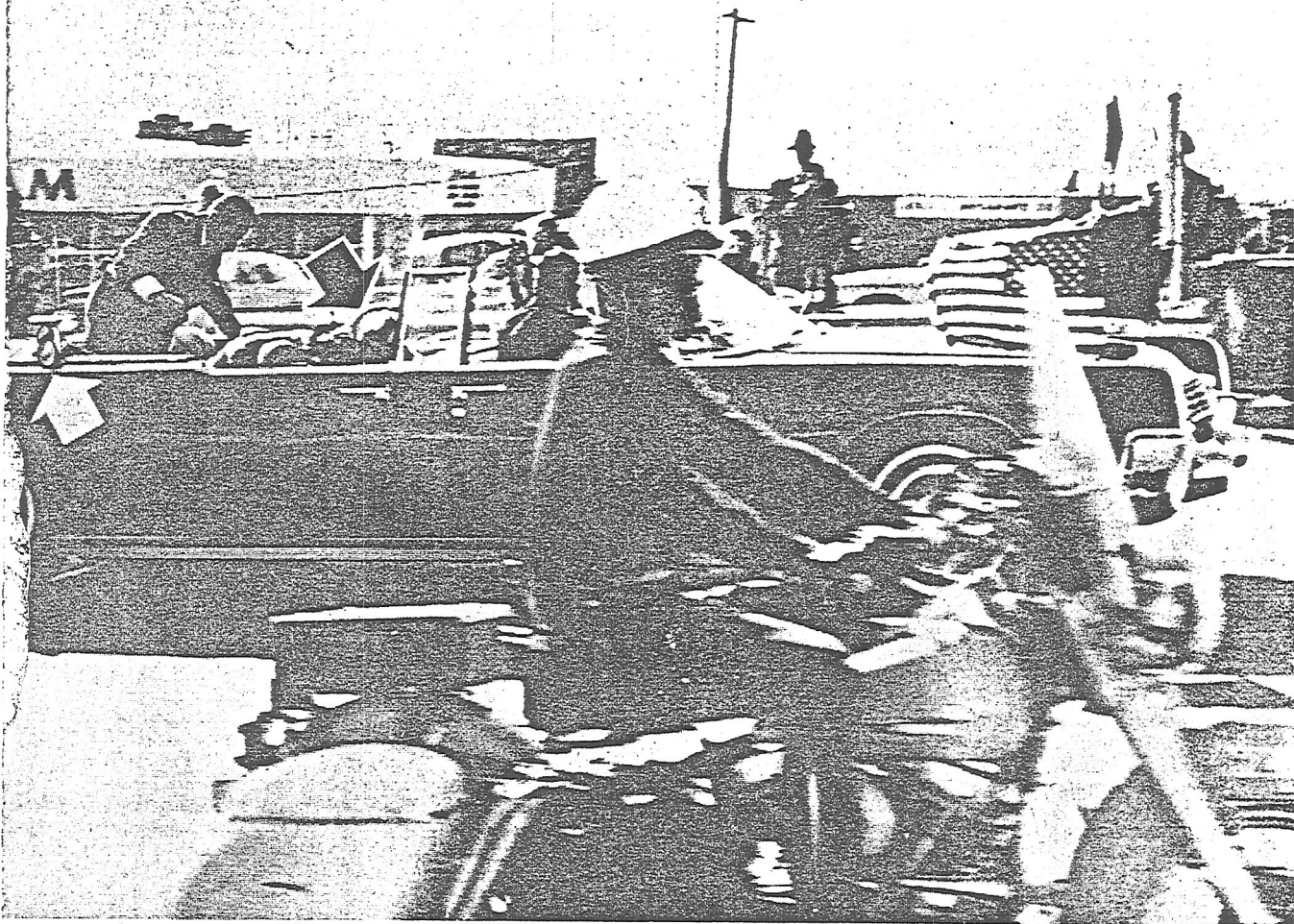


After Kennedy was shot, the motorcade

and reprisal.

It tells us of a young President, Jack Kennedy, not used to losing, who had become obsessed with bringing down the Castro regime in Cuba, with vindicating his disastrous, ill-supported Bay of Pigs invasion and with harnessing the rampaging U.S. intelligence community and its bands of assassins who were accusing him of treachery for his failure to provide them with air support in the Bay of Pigs massacre.

This sobering, shocking evidence, this sum total of the best efforts of able, painstaking investigators, further tells us of a situation stemming from the sinister assassination plots of the CIA-Mafia-Cuban exile groups that President Lyndon B. Johnson would call shortly before his death a "god-



*raced past toward Parkland Hospital. White arrow points to President's foot, black arrow to Connallys.*

damn Murder Incorporated in the Caribbean."

According to Vincent Salandria, a pioneer assassination researcher from center city Philadelphia, the evidence indicates an amoral universe of "hopeless, Cold War warriors hunting down Commies in dark alleys, blaming Jack Kennedy for the Bay of Pigs debacle and arming and financing a bloodthirsty horde of Cuban exile assassins and conspirators.

"It was," Salandria says, "an era of perpetual conspiracy entered into by spies who could not or would not come in from the cold."

This is the bizarre background against which congressional investigators and assassination researchers find the U.S. intelligence community, the Cuban exile groups, the organized-crime kingpins, and the conspiracy to murder Jack Kennedy all inevitably coming together.

These are the "areas of convergence," and this much is assumed to be true.

Beyond that, beyond the known facts and the assumed facts, beyond the physical evidence and the areas of convergence there is, according to Josiah Thompson—a 42-year-old former philosophy professor at Haverford College and eminently respected local critic of the Warren Commission Report—"a black box of hidden knowledge concerning Jack Kennedy's murder which we may never be able to penetrate."

It is in that last area, in that 14-year-old arcane realm beyond fact, beyond evidence and beyond assumption, that the men and women still working on the

Jack Kennedy murder case find themselves—chasing dead men, battling the glaciers of the Washington bureaucracy and attempting to find a key to that black box of assassination knowledge.

Until just five months ago the man who headed the most recent, the most independent and the most promising congressional investigation into this murder conspiracy was Philadelphia's own relentless professional prosecutor, former First Assistant District Attorney Richard A. Sprague.

Sprague, 51, had been selected by a U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Assassinations to reopen both the John F. Kennedy and the Martin Luther King murder cases.

Sprague, a small, seasoned, singularly mirthless survivor of Philadelphia's often malevolent, always turbulent criminal justice system, had been hired as much for his tough image as for

his solid background, which included one string of 69 homicide convictions out of 70 tries.

He appeared to be the apolitical, aggressive pro who could spearhead the House Select Committee's last, best effort to get to the bottom of the Kennedy mystery.

But, somewhere along the way, the very qualities in Sprague that had prompted the House to draft him in the first place—his lack of caucus room diplomacy; his insistence upon an autonomous, well-funded probe and his disdain for the petty prerequisites of Capitol Hill protocol—had resulted in his downfall.

His patient, methodical marshaling of detail, evidence and motive in his successful prosecution of United Mine Workers chief Tony Boyle for the murder of Jock Jablonski and his family had set such a standard of prosecutorial excellence that even the Watergate probers had copied his style.

He was a consensus choice of the usually bickering, contentious Warren Commission critics and assassination researchers. "The right man for the job," was the only way they could describe him. Yet Sprague, too, was ultimately denied access to the mystery of that strange black box.

Sprague's inquisition into the Kennedy case, which had begun in October 1976, and which ended tragically and abruptly on March 30th, 1977, had involved several other Philadelphia area participants in key investigative roles.

First and foremost there was Gaeton Fonzi, a former senior editor of *Philadelphia Magazine*, assassination researcher and Senate investigator who had functioned as Sprague's chief field detective.

Then there was Terry Lazin, wife of Republican District Attorney candidate Malcolm Lazin, who was working as an investigating attorney for Sprague's staff.

Next there was Father Thomas Gannon, S.J., a brilliant young Jesuit from South Philadelphia and now assistant to the president of Georgetown Univer-

sity, who had been lured from a position with the federal judiciary to assist Sprague.

Al Lewis—a smooth, politically astute, thoroughly experienced prosecutor from Lebanon County, just outside Philadelphia—had been recruited as Sprague's liaison or buffer between the actual day-to-day investigation into the Kennedy homicide and the vicious, vindictive world of congressional in-fighting.

Finally there was Burt Chardak, a *Bulletin* national affairs editor, who would serve as Sprague's embattled press officer and who would eventually and ruefully refer to the entire House Select experience as the "worst mistake of my life."

But long before Richard Sprague and his homicide team ever appeared on the Washington scene, the Philadelphia connection to the Jack Kennedy murder had been undeniably established.

### The Philadelphia Connection

The significant cities in the actual conspiracy to assassinate Jack Kennedy have always been from the sunbelt. Dallas, where the hit was made. New Orleans, where Lee Harvey Oswald was born and the conspiracy nurtured. Miami, where the Cuba-Mafia connection was manifest.

But one of the key cities in the 14-year-old investigation of that crime and its ensuing cover-up is arguably Philadelphia, mainly because so many pivotally important participants in that investigation are either present or former Philadelphians.

They include, in addition to the Sprague contingent, intimates of Lee Harvey Oswald; a prime FBI suspect other than Oswald; important Warren Commission members; pioneer researchers and Warren Commission critics, and the U.S. Senator and his staff who pursued the Cuban connection to the assassination.

Simply in terms of sheer numbers, the Philadelphia connection to the JFK assassination is persuasive. Over 20

people, who have either lived or worked in Philadelphia for all or part of their lives, are so closely related to the killing or its aftermath that any conventional grand jury reopening the case could easily subpoena every one of them.

In addition to these material witnesses there are, of course, hundreds of Philadelphia area assassination buffs and hobbyists. In many cases these are the obsessed laymen who collect rare, bootlegged prints of the Zapruder film; who attend the circuit of assassination conventions, like ghoulish Trekkies, and who make best-sellers out of many of the approximately 175 popular and scholarly books that are currently in print on the subject of the JFK assassination.

### The Baron and the Catherwood Foundation

George De Mohrenschildt—a tall, handsome, urbane White Russian aristocrat, originally from the Ukraine—at 51 was one of the most intriguing, cosmopolitan men in Dallas in the late winter of 1962.

He'd been born a baron in pre-Communist Russia and his family had been the sacred keepers of the czar's vast oil and petroleum interests.

Exiled by Lenin and the Communist revolution, De Mohrenschildt fled to the West—studying economics in Belgium; riding as a lancer with the Polish cavalry; and finally settling in the United States in the late 1930s. Over the next 15 years he'd often traveled to Philadelphia for business and pleasure and eventually married an heiress from Bryn Mawr, Wynne Sharples. During that time, as one of the Baron's recent biographers pointed out, "intrigue and oil were the two constants in the Baron's life."

The intrigue included a stint as a spy for the French government; close involvement with Nazi double-agents in the U.S. and Mexico during World War II, and consequent lifetime surveillance by the FBI; extensive dealing as an informant for the CIA; a mysterious

### SOME BACKGROUND FIGURES OF THE ERA



Shober

Catherwood

Sturgis

Paine

De Mohrenschildt



"walking tour" of Guatemala just as the CIA-directed Bay of Pigs invasion was being launched against Cuba from that very country; and eventually, direct implication in the conspiracy to assassinate John F. Kennedy.

As far as the oil angle was concerned, De Mohrenschildt functioned as a freelance geologist-explorer whose long list of clients included the rich and the powerful from Havana to Hong Kong.

But on a night in late December 1962, De Mohrenschildt seemed to be concerned with neither spying nor exploring. Instead, he was hosting a Christmas party.

The Baron was an eminently social man and invitations to his classy gatherings were some of the toughest tickets to come by in declassé Dallas.

Usually his guests were drawn from the moneyed, sophisticated oil fraternity he worked with, or from among the other Eastern European émigrés in Dallas whose social lives, like De Mohrenschildt's, revolved around St. Nicholas's, a prominent Russian Orthodox parish.

Over the years the worldwide anti-Communist Russian-Orthodox Church had, like its aristocratic flock, been an entity in exile, allegedly covertly supported in large part for mutually beneficial reasons by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Fifteen years earlier, in November 1947, the same month that the CIA was restructured from the old World War II OSS as the nation's chief spy apparatus, a reputable, philanthropic, private foundation was being incorporated in Philadelphia and headquartered in the dashing young De Mohrenschildt's old romantic stomping grounds, Bryn Mawr, just outside the city.

It was called the Catherwood Foundation and its purpose, its incorporation papers said, "was to establish a fund or funds, the income from which will be used exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literary and educational purposes."

Cummins Catherwood, a Main Line socialite from Haverford and former vice president of Fox Munitions Corporation, was the chief incorporator and chief executive officer of the Catherwood Foundation.

Its other principals and backstage patrons, who reportedly included people like J. Howard Pew the oil man, were all equally rich, equally Main Line and equally given to a ferocious, Cold War-inspired, anti-Communist brand of patriotic noblesse oblige.

According to IRS files, much of the

The significant cities in the conspiracy to kill Kennedy were in the sunbelt. But Philadelphia was pivotal in the subsequent investigation.

money behind the Catherwood Foundation, then and now, smacked pungently of oil fields, petroleum refineries and drilling ventures. It was the exact same aroma, in fact, of George De Mohrenschildt's professionals and social circles in Dallas.

Throughout its fascinating, mysterious existence, the Catherwood Foundation of Bryn Mawr has certainly made good on its original claims of corporate purpose.

Scientific expeditions—the kind of expeditions that often required geological engineers like De Mohrenschildt—were sponsored throughout Latin America by the Catherwood Foundation in one area of its operations; and, in another, right-wing journalists and newsmen from America and the rest of the world were honored in conjunction with a program at Columbia University for their pro-NATO, anti-Communist stances.

The same year as the President's assassination, principals of the foundation were even involved in a month-long cultural expedition throughout Russia and Eastern Europe, aided and accompanied by White Russian émigrés like De Mohrenschildt serving as interpreters and guides.

A couple of years before that, in 1961, the Catherwood Foundation involved itself with the Cuban exile community.

It set up a subsidiary organization in Paoli a few miles from its Bryn Mawr base at 850 West Lancaster Avenue. The Paoli organization was called Cuban Aid Relief and it had a regional office in Miami.

Cuban Aid Relief was set up for the express purpose of aiding Cuban exiles and anti-Castro émigrés. Its director at the time was another fixture at Main Line balls and debuts—E. Wharton Shober, the polo-playing, perennially controversial, recently resigned president of Hahnemann Hospital. Shober was a globe-trotter with frequent, lengthy stays in Latin America and a close personal friendship with Nicaraguan dictator General Somoza, one of the godfathers of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

The Catherwood Foundation, through its Cuban exile Relief Fund,

handed out substantial amounts of money in the form of loans and gifts to the exiles, and set up an extensive medical service program in Miami. It even hooked up with the International Refugee Committee to co-sponsor a six-week-long anti-Castro "press seminar" at the University of Miami for about 30 of the most vociferous exiled Cuban freedom fighters and journalists.

But it was in the area of religious charity that the Catherwood Foundation really shone. One of its favorite charities was, reportedly, the Russian Orthodox Church and that same St. Nicholas's parish in Dallas where Baron George De Mohrenschildt was so well known.

When *Philadelphia Magazine* approached Cummins Catherwood for comment, Catherwood Foundation spokesman Perry Gresh explained that the organization would make no comment. "Whatever is true is true. If research shows that it is true, then it must be true."

### The Paines Meet the Oswalds

But George De Mohrenschildt's Philadelphia connection did not end with his Bryn Mawr bride, nor with his parish's acceptance of the Catherwood largesse, nor even with his almost certain social mingling with Philadelphia's old-family oil millionaires. On that very night at De Mohrenschildt's party, the Baron was presiding over the introduction of a bright young couple, recently of Philadelphia, Ruth and Michael Paine, to another young couple, recently of Minsk in the Soviet Union, Marina and Lee Harvey Oswald.

Ruth Paine, a tall, striking, young Quaker activist, had been a well-known and popular member of the Quaker community in Philadelphia. She'd been a group worker and educator at the Center City YMCA and a familiar face around her old Germantown neighborhood since the middle 1950s when she had first settled in Philadelphia with her husband, Michael, after college.

Her husband was a well-to-do executive with the Bell Helicopter Company in a sensitive government-related job that required top security clearance.

Ruth Paine's father and her brother-in-law were both high level operatives for AID (Agency for International Development)—another one of those hard-to-figure, quasi-governmental Cold War-inspired agencies.

Her father and brother-in-law's boss at AID happened to be Baron George De Mohrenschildt's old boss dating

back from 1958 when the Baron had been recruited for an AID mission to Yugoslavia and then debriefed by the CIA upon his return to Dallas.

Ruth Paine also had other Philadelphia friends and relatives in the Paoli area. She herself was part of a national Quaker task force operating in conjunction with the State Department that was attempting to establish an exchange program with the Soviet Union, sending Russian-speaking Quakers there in exchange for English-speaking students. Her immediate problem was a need to learn the Russian language. She and her husband were in Dallas because he had recently been transferred to the Bell plant there.

The Oswalds, on the other hand, were neither Philadelphians nor Quakers. Marina, pretty, petite and dark-haired, was the niece of a low-level, KGB (Russian equivalent of the CIA) bureaucrat. She spoke halting English and had married, while still in the Soviet Union, a strange young U.S. defector named Lee Harvey Oswald.

Popular history, the Warren Commission Report and the press have combined to caricature Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged killer of JFK, as the archetypal creepy little "lone nut" assassin.

However, suave, worldly George De Mohrenschildt, the host at the party that night, had an entirely different view of his guest. As the Baron once told a visitor, "No matter what they say, Lee Harvey Oswald was a delightful guy. They make a moron out of him, but he was smart as hell. Ahead of his time, really. A kind of hippie of those days. In fact, he was the most honest man I knew. And I will tell you this—I am sure he did not shoot the President."

Actually, Oswald was a seemingly normal young man with a doting mother, a pretty wife and a young baby.

His family in New Orleans, the Paines would learn, had a long history of faithful, patriotic service to various branches of the U.S. military. And a cousin was even connected with a CIA-sponsored, government-supported think-tank at MIT.

Another cousin of Oswald's was a Jesuit seminarian from Alabama who used to arrange for Lee to give lectures to the other would-be Jesuits on world affairs.

During his time in Dallas, the Paines discovered, Oswald was living in a kind of Benedict Arnold-netherworld, seemingly unable to find a good job or peace

## WARREN COMMISSION FIGURES



Coleman

Specter

of mind and forced to live with the fact that he had defected to the Soviet Union after serving with the U.S. Marines. Yet, here he was, back in the U.S. now, with his Russian wife and his apparently dishonorable past, socializing with some of the most violently anti-Soviet, anti-Communist people on the face of the earth. It didn't add up. Nor, it turned out, had any of it made any sense to the Russians themselves.

Assassination investigators have discovered that the Russians were convinced that Lee Harvey Oswald had been nothing more than a plant, a deep-cover agent who had "defected" to the Soviet Union on instructions of his government.

While in the service, before his defection, Oswald had been trained in intelligence at a top-secret military base in the Pacific, and had received a higher security clearance than his own commanding officer.

Back in the Dallas area, Oswald, many JFK assassination investigators believe, had been reassigned to the White Russian community and De Mohrenschildt (through whose connections he hoped to infiltrate both the pro and anti-Castro movements in the Southern United States). And there is ample evidence to support Oswald's Cuban connection. In the meantime, Oswald had become a frequent informant for the FBI, meeting with them on eight or ten occasions, and he may have been functioning as a contract agent for the CIA, according to recently declassified documents.

But, Ruth Paine didn't like Oswald very much, she told *Philadelphia Magazine* last month in her Germantown apartment, where she was staying for part of the summer.

"... Lee seemed a little too flaky to me. If you didn't agree with exactly what he had to say, he had no use for you. He may have been a secret agent for our government like they say now, but I can tell you this, if I were the CIA I never would have hired him. He wasn't stable."

Ruth Paine cryptically explained that she was at the party where she met Lee Harvey Oswald because of a "shared and mutual interest in English Madrigal poetry with some of the people who would be there."

In any event, Baron De Mohrenschildt, fluent in five languages, was aware of Ruth Paine's interest in learning to speak Russian and of Marina Oswald's availability as a teacher. According to Ruth Paine, the two young women promptly got together, struck up a teaching arrangement and a friendship and eventually became inseparable—almost as inseparable, as a matter of fact, as Lee Harvey Oswald and the Baron.

Marina quickly became a darling of the Russian émigrés in Dallas and De Mohrenschildt's friends in particular. Her husband, Lee, whoever and whatever he really was, was working at a series of menial jobs at the time, and the Baron's friends all but kept food on the Oswalds' table and clothes on their backs.

At the time, both the Oswalds and the Paines were having marital problems. For a period of several months, Ruth and Marina decided to move into the Paine home in suburban Irving, outside Dallas, while Lee Harvey Oswald and Michael Paine remained in the city. But the two husbands were also friendly, and would often discuss politics or attend local ACLU meetings together where Oswald was an occasional vocal participant.

The marital estrangements were apparently cordial enough, because both husbands visited their wives just about every weekend. As Ruth Paine recalled last month, "Lee and Marina were still very affectionate toward each other. She'd sit on his lap while they watched TV and they'd hug and kiss like anybody else."

"Lee used to sit on the floor and watch the football games on TV—the college games on Saturday and the pros on Sunday—he was always nice to me."

"I remember once when my door was stuck from the dampness, Lee took it off the hinges and planed it down and made it as good as new."

But the most peculiar thing about this incredible situation was Oswald's insistence that he and his wife and Ruth Paine speak only Russian when they were together and his reluctance to have Marina master English. Oswald had studied Russian in the service and through the Texas State Employment Agency had attempted unsuccessfully to get a job at the Dallas Library as a Russian translator.

Ruth Paine's Russian was anything but good, and she insisted that Oswald speak English sometimes—especially when she was teaching him to drive.

"That was strange, too," Ruth Paine told *Philadelphia Magazine*, "that a young man of Lee's generation and obvious intelligence had never learned how to drive. But I thought it must have been because he had enlisted in the Marines so soon after high school—his family were so into the military thing."

Most of the Oswalds' worldly possessions were stored in the Paine garage, including what Ruth Paine thought were curtain rods wrapped in a blanket.

But the Warren Commission and Marina Oswald would later testify that the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle, the antique Italian gun that Oswald had supposedly used to kill Jack Kennedy, was actually in that blanket in Ruth Paine's garage.

Ruth Paine knew that Oswald had a rifle with a very colorful shoulder strap. But, she would later tell the Warren Commission, the rifle and strap that Oswald had once shown her didn't look very much at all like the Mannlicher-Carcano that Oswald had supposedly hidden in her garage until the Kennedy assassination.

During the several months of her friendship with the Oswalds, Ruth Paine left Dallas for a while in the late summer of 1963 to visit her relatives who worked for AID in Washington. While she was gone, the Oswalds traveled to New Orleans. Later on, Ruth Paine also went to New Orleans to pick up Marina and drive her back to Dallas. Lee Harvey Oswald vanished at that point, perhaps going to Mexico, according to the Warren Commission, or perhaps staying in the South, infiltrating Cuban exile movements, according to some eyewitnesses.

In any case, when they all got together again in Dallas that fall, Ruth Paine took it upon herself to arrange, through a friend of hers, for Lee Harvey Oswald to get a job at the Texas School Book Depository.

Years later at the Clay Shaw trial in New Orleans, Ruth Paine would testify and would again confirm last month, that Oswald had expressed a distinct desire to her, at the time, to relocate in Philadelphia and pursue a career.

"I used to talk about Philadelphia a lot," she explained, "and I think that he believed that he and Marina would have a better chance here."

The night before Jack Kennedy was

Some time before his arrest, Lee Oswald told Ruth Paine that he wanted to relocate his family in the Philadelphia area.

killed, Oswald unexpectedly visited his wife at Ruth Paine's house and argued with her there. Their on-again, off-again marital problems had been worsening.

Both Marina and Ruth Paine had become aware of the strange double-life that Lee Harvey Oswald was leading in Dallas and New Orleans—infiltrating Cuban exile movements, taking instructions from Baron De Mohrenschildt, establishing phony identities and addresses and keeping a rifle and a pistol.

The Oswalds also had a new baby and Marina, whom Lee had once threatened to send back to Russia, wanted a more normal existence for her family and her husband—whoever and whatever he might be.

Ruth Paine thinks that the Oswalds wanted to get away from the sinister Russian émigré community and the mysterious Baron De Mohrenschildt; away from foreboding St. Nicholas's; away from Oswald's apparent multiple-identity spy games, and away from his inexplicable, self-imposed, economic lifestyle of menial, low-paying jobs, like the \$1.25 an hour stockboy position at the Texas School

#### UNOFFICIAL INVESTIGATORS



Above: Salandria, Weisberg  
Below: Thompson, Roberts

Book Depository at which he had eagerly jumped.

Later that night Ruth Paine noticed that the light in her garage was on and that the blanket around the curtain rods had been tampered with.

Ruth Paine will never forget what happened shortly after noontime the next day:

"I was out hanging up the wash, mostly diapers, because between us we had four small children in the house at the time, and Marina was sitting on the sofa watching television. I think I'd had a dental or medical appointment earlier that morning.

"Marina was watching the news to see President Kennedy's motorcade in Dallas when it happened. The announcer screamed that he'd been shot and Marina got all excited. I did the best I could to translate what was going on in Russian for her. All I kept thinking was that they said they thought the shots had come from the building where Lee worked. That got Marina more upset and she ran into the bedroom and started crying."

That afternoon the police rushed the Paine house after the grisly events in Dallas—the assassination of John F. Kennedy, the murder of Dallas policeman J. D. Tippit, and the capture of Lee Harvey Oswald—had come to pass.

Ruth Paine, Marina Oswald and Ruth's husband, Michael, who had popped up, were all hauled down to the police station and the Paine household was ransacked by the excited officers.

Ruth Paine was quickly separated from Marina Oswald.

Lee Harvey Oswald, however, kept trying to get through to Ruth Paine from his Dallas jail cell, and he finally did by telephone, begging her to get him a well-known lawyer from the New York-Philadelphia area who, he was sure, would prove his innocence and knock holes in the so-called evidence against him.

Ruth Paine testified that she tried and failed to get in touch with the lawyer.

Originally, both Marina Oswald and Ruth Paine insisted that it was all a horrible mistake—that Lee couldn't have been involved. In fact, Mrs. Paine initially told the Warren Commission that she never even considered Oswald potentially violent, nor had he ever spoken of John F. Kennedy with anything but admiration and praise.

But in the supercharged atmosphere of the assassination's aftermath, all that changed abruptly.

In fact, Ruth Paine now says she

could hardly believe the things that she was hearing. Bewildered, she listened as Marina Oswald claimed, after originally defending her husband, that she really thought he had killed Kennedy and that she'd figured as much as soon as she heard that the shots may have come from the Texas School Book Depository. Not only that, but, the young Russian wife blurted out—and this is when Ruth Paine says that she was totally dumbfounded—her husband had tried to assassinate a right-wing general just weeks before and had planned other assassinations as well. That certainly didn't seem to be the Lee Harvey Oswald she had come to know, sprawled on the living room floor in front of her TV.

But the inconsistencies and contradictions continued then as they would for the next 14 years. One of the strangest things occurred the afternoon after the assassination. Ruth Paine was back in her rancher in Irving, Texas, trying to calm down after the emotional shock that had suddenly plunged her into a world of cops and cameras and counter espionage.

There was a knock on her door and five policemen were standing there. They had come back to look for more evidence against Oswald. Ruth Paine claimed she was annoyed because she was a stickler for neat housekeeping and the cops had disrupted the house pretty thoroughly the day before.

But Ruth Paine just let them in, and instead of staying with them while they rummaged through her home this time, she abruptly left her house, saying that she had some marketing to do—allowing the cops free reign, unsurprisingly, for the rest of the afternoon.

It was during this search that the cops would later testify they came up with some of the most incriminating evidence, allegedly found in the Paine home and garage, against Lee Harvey Oswald: photographs of Oswald holding a gun, which he claimed were phony, and which Ruth Paine would later testify she had never even seen before.

However, by the time the case was closed and the investigators were finished with Ruth Paine, she too ended up contradicting her initial remarks and eventually testified that, yes, she was sure Lee Harvey Oswald could have and did kill President Kennedy. Today Ruth Paine still clings tenaciously to her latter contentions that Lee Harvey Oswald was the hit man.

After the Dallas nightmare, Ruth Paine bounced around the country, trying to straighten out her own life and

## SENATE INVESTIGATORS



Marston

Schweiker

her deteriorating marital situation. In 1971 she settled back in Germantown where she got a job as principal of the Quaker Greene Street School. She stayed there until 1975 when she voluntarily resigned and relocated in Florida. But this past summer she was back in Germantown, visiting with friends and reluctantly discussing her relationship with the Oswalds.

In February 1976, the log of a secret FBI wiretap on Ruth Paine's phone was released through a Freedom of Information Suit instituted by an assassination investigator who would eventually go to work for Richard Sprague when Sprague turned his own attention to the JFK murder case.

That FBI log reads in part: "a confidential informant advised that the male voice (identified as Michael Paine) was heard to comment that he felt sure that Lee Harvey Oswald had killed the President, but did not feel that Oswald was responsible; and further stated, 'We both know who was responsible.'"

The mystery remains. Who and What was Lee Harvey Oswald? How had the Oswalds and the Paines and Baron De Mohrenschildt all crossed paths in Dallas? Was Oswald really one of the assassins despite his insistence of innocence and his charge of a frame-up? To whom was Michael Paine referring about bearing responsibility for the assassination?

If Ruth Paine, the Quaker lady from Germantown knows, she isn't saying.

### The Soldier of Fortune

The day after Jack Kennedy was murdered, the FBI continued its all-out nationwide search for possible accomplices even though Oswald was in custody, and the theory of a conspiracy had been officially discounted.

One of the very first people they questioned at his Miami home was 32-year-old Frank Sturgis, a stocky, swarthy anti-Communist soldier-of-fortune who had been a favorite subject for stories by his good friend, columnist Jack Anderson.

Sturgis would later tell assassination

investigator Michael Canfield: "I had FBI agents all over my house. . . . They told me I was one person they felt had the capabilities to do it. They said, 'Frank, if there's anybody capable of killing the President of the United States, you're the guy that can do it. . . .'"

On three subsequent occasions between November 1963 and May 1964, the FBI would again question Frank Sturgis about the Kennedy assassination and about Lee Harvey Oswald.

The FBI's return visits were prompted, in part, by several stories that appeared in a small Florida newspaper linking Sturgis to Oswald, the assassination and the violence-prone anti-Castro Cuban community in Miami. The FBI was impressed by the account since it had been written by a former partner and comrade-in-arms of Frank Sturgis.

But who was Frank Sturgis and why, 24 hours after Kennedy's assassination, did the FBI tell him they thought he was capable of killing the President?

Frank Sturgis was born Frank Fiorini. As Fiorini, he had been reared in Philadelphia, first on High Street and then later on Tulpehocken Street in Germantown.

Fiorini had attended Our Lady of the Rosary parochial school, Roosevelt Junior High and Germantown High, where he dropped out in 1942 to join the Marines and begin his free-booting life as a soldier-spy-saboteur for hire.

Over the years Fiorini changed his name to Sturgis, utilizing it as one of about ten aliases he adopted throughout his career. He may have changed his name to Sturgis, as he claimed, for family reasons; or, as some JFK assassination investigators conjecture, he may have adopted the name from a character in a spy novel written by E. Howard Hunt—a prolific novelist, and top-level CIA case officer whose portfolio was Cuba.

It's unclear just when Sturgis hooked up with Hunt but as soon as he did, the two men would mastermind much of the intrigue in the key Cuban area of convergence regarding the murder of Jack Kennedy—working for and against Castro in Cuba; working for and with the organized crime figures who had been thrown off that island, and who would continually attempt to get back on; and, finally, working with hundreds of CIA contract employees who were mixed up with both the Cuban exiles and the doomed Bay of Pigs invasion.

Years later, Senator Richard Schweiker's U. S. Senate subcommittee investigating all these events as



they related to the Kennedy assassination, would discover that Frank Sturgis of Germantown had in fact been a conspirator in several assassination plots, directed by the CIA, not only against Fidel Castro but against other leaders as well throughout Latin America, Europe and Africa.

Much later, also, a series of long suppressed photographs would eventually be circulated among the Congress and the public depicting three supposed "tramps" who had been arrested as suspicious characters near Dealey Plaza just moments after Jack Kennedy had been assassinated. Two of the tramps, some thought, resembled Frank Sturgis of Tulpehocken Street and his CIA boss, Howard Hunt.

In 1972 the rest of the country would learn of Frank Sturgis's activities when he and his superior, Hunt, were both arrested for engineering the Watergate burglary. Sturgis was one of the five burglars caught in the building.

But as far as Kennedy's assassination was concerned, Sturgis, who readily admits knowledge of other CIA hits, maintains his innocence.

However, Sturgis did testify that, in his informed opinion, there were definite discrepancies between who was really responsible for the assassination and what the public was told. "I think there was a tremendous conspiracy going on in that assassination that the Warren Commission has not told all, that they covered up a lot of things they didn't want the American people to know, and I think that there are people in various federal agencies who may have covered up."

### Arlen Specter and the Warren Commission

Arlen Specter was just a young, aggressive assistant district attorney in Philadelphia when the Warren Commission tapped him to become an assistant counsel in the Commission's "Area I—The Basic Facts of the Assassination."

Specter knew about espionage from his Air Force days as a special agent for military intelligence's Office of Special Investigations.

As an assistant DA he had been making political and professional hay as the prosecutor in a ruthless crack-down on Philadelphia's lawless Teamsters Local 107. As a matter of fact, he'd been putting Teamsters away by the truckful—six union enforcers in less than ten weeks.

He seemed like a logical enough

According to recent polls, 80% of Americans consider the single-bullet theory lunacy. The Warren report is generally considered to be a cover-up.

choice for Chief Justice Earl Warren's blue ribbon commission that was charged with ascertaining the facts in the Kennedy assassination. Arlen Specter remembers it well:

"Warren met with the staff and said our job was to find the truth. He told us how he got into the thing—that Lyndon Johnson really pressured him into it; that the country was risking nuclear war with Russia if the Warren Commission didn't calm everyone down and put to rest theories of a conspiracy.

"Warren was a tremendous guy, impeccably honest, and he wouldn't have subordinated the truth for an instant. And I can tell you that categorically neither would I."

Specter gained international fame for his work on the Warren Commission, which essentially involved the formulation of the "single bullet" or "magic bullet" theory—the cornerstone of the Commission's "lone nut" contention.

Millions of words and thousands of pages have been written both for and against this theory and it is probably the single most thoroughly researched area of contention in the annals of the assassination.

Basically, the single-bullet theory contends that there was one gunman firing one rifle from the rear of the Texas School Book Depository and that one of his bullets went through Jack Kennedy and then emerged and entered Governor John Connally of Texas, shattering his wrist and thigh. The bullet then finally exited for good, virtually intact, with no visible signs of its contact with bone, muscle and sinew.

According to the latest polls, 80% of the American people consider this theory utter lunacy and the congress-

sional and independent investigators still working on the assassination no longer even bother to refute it, consigning it to the other clear-cut instances of cover-up that have become the legacy of the Warren Commission.

For Specter's theory to be correct, according to a prominent Commission critic, "... you must believe that bullets pause in mid air and make 90°, right-hand turns; that a poor marksman [which Oswald's service record indicates he was] can do what experts cannot; that Newtonian laws of motion were not operating on November 22nd; that a man can be in two places at once; that atoms are able to change their structure; and that everything in life is mere coincidence."

Specter, of course, is just as adamant about the accuracy of his single-bullet theory.

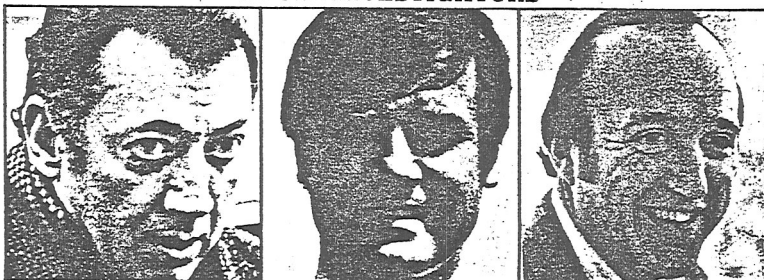
"I stand behind the single-bullet theory totally, and if anybody has any hard evidence against it I would be glad to see it."

Specter had been heightening his recognition factor, pumping up his political fortunes and even contributing to his election as Philadelphia's district attorney in 1970 by debating people all over the world for the last dozen years about the single-bullet theory. But now, he's more reluctant to put it all on the line in what has become an increasingly hostile, anti-Warren Commission national environment. He also feels that most forums are rigged to favor the cause of conspiracy over the "lone nut" assassin:

"Take Joel Spivak on WCAU, for example. He calls me up and says, 'Will you come and debate Mark Lane [the most famous of all Warren Commission critics and the author of *Rush to Judgment*] on my television program?' I said, 'Joel, do you have four hours?' And he said, 'Arlen, we'd like to put you two on in a 12-minute segment.' 'Twelve minutes! Why it takes him 12 seconds to make his ridiculous charges, and it takes me 12 hours to answer them.'"

The media has, according to Arlen *continued on page 230*

### HOUSE INVESTIGATORS



Sprague

Edgar

Lewis

## Kennedy

*continued from page 143*

Specter, forever doomed any further constructive debate on the subject of the Warren Commission by conspiratorially assassinating the character of the Commission itself.

The final word on Specter's single-bullet odyssey may have recently been uttered by Bud Fensterwald Jr., a prominent Washington lawyer and leading scholar in the area of assassination lore. "Specter had seemingly devised [a way] to explain away several important pieces of evidence which seemed to indicate the presence of more than one rifleman. . . . Beyond a sizable body of actual ballistic and medical evidence which seriously negates the probability of the Specter theory, recent analyses of the Zapruder film strongly undermine the entire basis of the theory."

Like Frank Sturgis, following his Warren Commission involvement, Arlen Specter would also go to work for Nixon—he was Nixon's Reelection Campaign Co-ordinator in Pennsylvania and eventually was considered a potential chief counsel for the defense in the President's anticipated impeachment hearing. But unlike Sturgis, Specter insists that the Warren Commission, given the information that it had, leveled with the people.

### William Coleman's Silence

Another prominent Philadelphian recruited for service on the Warren Commission was William T. Coleman, one of the city's leading black attorneys and a mainstay at the Dilworth law firm in downtown Philadelphia. Coleman has been one of the most upwardly mobile blacks in the entire United States, sitting on all sorts of boards, like Septa's, then being appointed by Nixon to the Federal Wage and Price Commission, and by Ford to the cabinet post of U.S. Secretary of Transportation. He is a lawyer's lawyer.

Unlike Arlen Specter, who had the responsibility for establishing the basic facts of the assassination itself, William Coleman was the lawyer in charge of "Area IV—Possible Conspiratorial Relationships." Coleman reported directly to Chief Justice Earl Warren.

Coleman's security clearance and intelligence background was also of a considerably higher level than Specter's because of his service on government commissions overseeing atomic energy control and nuclear disarmament.

Over the years Coleman has refused to talk with any publication, including *Philadelphia Magazine*, and with any independent researchers examining the assassination and its aftermath. That silence is still in effect.

What is known through the recent, partial declassification of some of William Coleman's confidential memos to other Warren Commission staffers and to other figures in the government, is that Coleman was apparently troubled by the inconsistencies, contradictions and outright lies that became the highlights of the Warren Commission's findings.

One of these memos, written by Coleman, in conjunction with his Commission colleague, David Slawson, delved deeply into Oswald's well-established contacts with the sniper-happy anti-Castro Cubans.

Coleman's biggest problems were caused by a young Cuban exile woman of aristocratic background named Sylvia Odio who had, coincidentally enough, been educated at exclusive Catholic girls' academies on the Philadelphia Main Line.

The exact day that the Warren Commission officially had Lee Harvey Oswald in Mexico trying to get a visa to go to Cuba or Russia, Miss Odio swore that she had been present at a meeting in Dallas where Oswald and some anti-Castro Cubans had talked about assassinating Jack Kennedy in revenge for his shakeup of the CIA's Cuban operation and his supposed bungling of the Bay of Pigs invasion.

Miss Odio herself was deeply involved with the anti-Castro terrorist units. She approached the Warren Commission with her information after she saw Lee Harvey Oswald's picture on television. According to a passage from one of Coleman's censored documents, everything Miss Odio claimed — times, dates, places — "thoroughly checked out."

Coleman went on the record saying that he considered Miss Odio to be an excellent and reliable witness. He and his whole staff were very concerned over the implications of Oswald's Cuban connection.

His staff pursued this Oswald-Cuban angle but when they revealed their findings to the authors of the final Warren Report, they were told, "At this point we're supposed to be closing doors, not opening them."

Since then, Coleman will not comment on his work for the Warren Commission.

William T. Coleman could have conceivably been one of the greatest heroes of American history by blowing the whistle on the Warren Commission cover-up, but instead, he remained silent.

Currently, he is a prosperous, well-connected lawyer in Washington.

### The Critics Counter-Attack

Even before the first printing of the

Warren Commission Report received widespread circulation in 1965, its critics and detractors had already been sniping at it.

A considerable amount of the initial, nerve-racking, line-by-line dissection of the report was done by first-generation critics from Philadelphia.

Vincent Salandria, who was at the time a young lawyer for the Philadelphia School District and an ACLU legal consultant, was the first Philadelphian to put into print, in a lengthy series of articles in *The Legal Intelligencer*, the local attorneys' newspaper, what, Salandria says, was on everybody's mind at the time.

"The idea that the top of the U.S. government killed Kennedy or covered up the killing was the single, overriding, central idea in the minds of early Commission critics.

"In 1965 I told Philadelphians the truth—that there were basic contradictions between the report and its own evidence and not gray contradictions, either, but obvious black and white contradictions.

"I received incredibly warm and early acceptance for my ideas."

Salandria, as he sometimes does, overstated his case. At the time of his early work, practically no one dared even dream in their wildest flights of paranoia that an agency or officials of the U.S. government could be mixed up with Kennedy's killing or a cover-up. But the other things that Salandria said and wrote about—what he calls "hard, seminal work on trajectories and ballistic evidence"—made a lot of sense to a lot of people.

One of them was Gaeton Fonzi—a veteran *Philadelphia Magazine* investigative reporter with a national reputation for doing the kind of stories, month in and month out, that involved incredible revelations like those about which Vincent Salandria was talking. A few years ago Fonzi explained his instinctive interest at that time. "Vince Salandria's article in *The Legal Intelligencer* was a highly detailed analysis of the head hit. I read the thing and couldn't understand it because it was so complicated. But as I'm reading it I'm getting the gist of it and the gist of it was that the Warren Commission was wrong; and I'm thinking, Jesus Christ, this guy's saying that the Warren Commission is wrong and here he is giving all this detailed background analysis that certainly appears as if he knows what he's talking about. It was like reading an article written by an engineer where you don't know what he's saying but you know the point he's trying to make.

"And at the time you've got to remember it was back in '65 and it was

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just incredible to me that somebody would contradict something as basic as the Warren Commission Report—a report from the government that had all these highly esteemed men connected with it. So I clipped it out and put it aside and thought, Jesus, this might make a good article someday.”

Fonzi was right. Salandria’s theories, backed up by the magazine writer’s own lengthy, cross-country detective work would eventually result in three significant, well-thought-out articles over the next several years, all questioning the accuracy of the Warren Report and the motives of the men behind it.

While Salandria’s own enthusiasm waned and ultimately changed direction altogether—from that hard, irrefutable, mechanical criticism that other researchers still praise him for, to a murky, morbid obsession with international conspiracies—Fonzi would continue his own independent investigation.

But at the same time, Josiah Thompson, a Haverford philosophy professor, who was then teaching a course in Kierkegaard and who would ultimately speak of the “black box of hidden assassination knowledge,” had also become hooked on the Warren Commission controversy.

“The fact pattern was enormously complicated—challenging. It was fascinating intellectually and cerebrally,” Thompson recalls.

“You couldn’t find out who or why from the volumes of evidence but you could look at the evidence itself—the evidence that the report ignored—and you could see that we were being had. And that made me angry.”

Thompson, who was only in his early 30s at the time, was already a buff on the Alger Hiss spy case and was familiar with the enormity of any task that involved cross-examining official versions and contradicting popular myth.

Nevertheless, Thompson devoted himself to exposing the Warren Commission Report and its keystone, Arlen Specter’s single-bullet theory, for what he believed it to be—a blatant attempt to pervert evidence to fit a pattern of preconceptions.

His work resulted in a critically acclaimed, best-selling book, *Six Seconds in Dallas*, that argued convincingly for multiple assassins, multiple bullets and an immediate reopening of the case.

So respected was Thompson’s opinion that for a time he became something of a professional assassination consultant for magazines, television and independent researchers.

Eventually, Thompson’s own investigative expertise developed to such a

point that he left teaching philosophy and became a private investigator—a career that he is now pursuing in California. “I started out working for a guy, Harold Lipset, who was the chief Watergate investigator. Now I’m really into the thing full time, and my continuing interest in the Kennedy case is necessarily long distance. And it’s just as well, too. Because it was getting so frustrating and I was getting so angry all the time, I would wind up getting nowhere. Just when you thought you’d get a break, when you thought you’d get a document declassified or a CIA agent to tell the truth, you’d hit another roadblock and the whole thing would collapse.

“I’m convinced that any further investigation has to be quiet, subtle and long-range. An individual can’t do it. It’s got to be big and well-funded—the whole congressional approach. And as far as the basic question in the Kennedy assassination is concerned—who gave the ‘Go’ signal, who put the conspiracy into motion—we’re nowhere near that yet.”

While local Warren Commission critics like Salandria, Fonzi and Thompson were working with the material at hand—the volumes of testimony, the sketchy autopsy material and the highly censored background dossier on Lee Harvey Oswald—a former Philadelphian was not only taking this approach but also attempting to get the missing pieces; to get the documents, photographs, memos and reports that would further expose the vague, almost ludicrous inconsistencies apparent in the Warren Report.

“It was a gunshot homicide and your basic, beginning points were ballistics and the medical evidence. I immediately began what I regard as a diligent, persistent effort to obtain all the information possible in those two areas.” In such a way Harold Weisberg, late of South Philadelphia, begins his explanation of his own assassination investigation addiction.

“I planned, if possible, to devote myself to it full time. I was older and more mature than the other critics working at the time. I guess I was over 50 when I first started, and I had previous life experiences that nobody else in the field had—I was a Senate investigator; I was an investigative reporter, and I had been an intelligence analyst for the OSS and the CIA. Why, I even knew the CIA case officer who was in charge of the Dallas area when I’d been with the Company myself and sure enough, it later turned out that the same guy was mixed up in the Kennedy thing. When I sat in my living room and saw Lee Harvey Oswald gunned down on television, I turned to my wife and



said, 'This looks familiar.' "

Weisberg, a tough, crew-cut, 68-year-old former reporter for the *Philadelphia Record* who now lives in suburban Maryland—close enough to the National Archives so that he can commute every day—was actually onto the Kennedy case long before Salandria, Thompson, Fonzi or any of the rest. In fact, his work even predates that of so-called assassination pioneers like Mark Lane and Edward Epstein. But Weisberg was working alone, with little money, no book contract and no real hope of obtaining a publisher's go-ahead.

"In those days the publishers didn't want to hear anything critical of the Warren Commission Report and there was still a heavy blanket of Cold War-era paranoia about *anybody* who was *un-American* enough to put into print the things I was saying about the Warren Commission cover-up.

"But I kept working. When I was writing my *Whitewash* series I'd go to sleep and I'd wake up two hours later with an idea, and I'd start typing it before I had a chance to put my clothes on. I had undertaken an enormous task and there was only my wife and me. She was my typesetter, my proof-reader, my typist and my indexer, and I

had to become my own printer."

The *Whitewash* series which re-examined the assassination on an almost minute-by-minute basis led to several other books and to many years of involvement with Freedom of Information suits and appeals under various public right-to-know laws. This tedious courtroom negotiating eventually resulted in the release of much of the most secret data long withheld from the Warren Commissioners and the public. In fact, one Senate investigator claims that "it is impossible to over-estimate the importance of Weisberg's contributions."

Weisberg was often in and out of Philadelphia during those early years and he credits Jack McKinney's late-night WCAU radio show with being instrumental, not only in giving a forum to his own views but in legitimizing the whole idea of Warren Commission dissent.

"McKinney would get people from all over the country to debate and hash out the known facts of the assassination and the criticisms of the Report. It took a lot of guts to do that sort of thing back then, but McKinney did an enormous service for every critic. Not until many years later would the Senate and the Congress recognize the importance and

the veracity of the things we were saying—the things that McKinney and his audience were tuned into in the mid-'60s."

Today Weisberg is ill and the pace of his work has slowed down considerably. He has also come to distrust many of his fellow critics—even the fraternity from Philadelphia—whom he accuses of prostituting the integrity of the assassination investigation for quick profits and glory.

Weisberg is also angry with the congressional investigators who, he says, cart off his files by the box-load and excerpt from his work at will, but who, at the same time, ignore his advice on the most fruitful areas of further investigation.

Harold Weisberg, in fact, admits that he's a bitter man; that he's been impoverished by his efforts, and that the key to the conspiracy that resulted in the Kennedy assassination is still missing. But he is just as determined as ever to continue the work that he began almost 14 years ago.

"I guess there is a certain amount of stubbornness involved—a certain amount of bullheadedness, of responding to challenge—but it's *my* country, too, and I have a right to know who shot my President. There was no real

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investigation. The President was gunned down in broad daylight on the streets of a modern American city, and was then kissed off into history with the dubious epitaph of an utterly inadequate investigation. *I can't stand that and I won't give in to that.*"

### The Investigation Goes Underground

By 1966 the first generation of Philadelphia critics and their national counterparts had been joined by millions of Americans, some as influential as conservative columnist William F. Buckley, Cardinal Cushing and all sorts of politicians and celebrities, in demanding that the case be reopened and that the Warren Commissioners be forced to tell all.

A number of publications began hiring people like Josiah Thompson—*Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, in particular—in an all-out effort to make the most, both editorially and commercially, of the assassination fever.

*The New York Times* was involved in a big way, too, with special investigation units, assassination task forces and public commitments about getting at the truth as only *The New York Times* could.

Gene Roberts was an important man at the *Times*. Today he is the executive editor of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, but back then he served under Harrison Salisbury, a *Times* big wheel and its resident JFK investigation spokesman.

Every couple of years the *Times* had and would continue to blow hot and cold on the accuracy of the Warren Commission Report.

But when all was said and done, they accomplished almost nothing. Robert Sam Anson, the best of the new breed of assassination critics, quotes the *Inquirer's* Gene Roberts on the *Times's* approach to the assassination problem in this way: "We found no evidence that the Warren Commission was wrong, which was not to say the Warren Commission was right."

While that was a typical *Times*ean, and typical Gene Roberts avoidance of conflict, it simply illustrated the basic problem of assassination inquiry at that time—even though everybody knew there was something rotten in Denmark, it was so risky, so damn time-consuming, and so difficult from an investigative point of view to reopen the matter that it was easier for the public and the press, even *The New York Times*, to ignore the problem and pretend it would just go away.

While the words of articulate, independent critics like Harold Weisberg would haunt some, the warning of the Warren Commission member to Wil-

liam Coleman's staffer that it was time to close doors, not to open them, seemed to characterize the prevailing public consciousness.

That public consciousness was tranquilized still further against any journalistic efforts to exhume the conspiracy in the years that followed by such disasters as Jim Garrison's witch-hunting in New Orleans.

Congressional investigators now acknowledge privately that Garrison, the martyred New Orleans district attorney, was definitely on the right track in his efforts to pin the assassination on dignified old Clay Shaw and his cohorts, almost all of whom would eventually turn out to be CIA contract employees, anti-Castro Cuban exile sympathizers or Mafia henchmen.

But, at the time, Jim Garrison was pilloried as the Joe McCarthy of his era; his efforts were wasted; his reputation was destroyed, and the national incentive to find out who really killed Kennedy was abandoned.

In rapid succession the Vietnam War, Nixon and Watergate, plus other equally stunning, equally sensational assassinations—Robert Kennedy, Martin Luther King and the wounding of George Wallace—numbed the public and the press to the once-aching sting of the memory of Jack Kennedy's murder.

As far as the Philadelphia connection to the assassination was concerned, the local critics kept whiling away the years in the National Archives, re-examining and resifting evidence, like archaeologists, or battling with the federal bureaucracy in courts of law to have more documents revealed. History rolled on. The Sturgis, Specter and Coleman alliances with Nixon developed but they were seemingly unrelated to that head shot in Dallas on November 22nd, 1963. Gaeton Fonzi left Philadelphia and temporarily suspended his own productive inquiries into the case while he relocated in Miami.

But, ironically, it was that same Watergate-Nixon nightmare that had so distracted the public's attention from the Kennedy murder that would once again re-focus it on that deadly day in Dealey Plaza.

### The Schweiker Senate Investigation

Late in 1975 the lid on the Jack Kennedy murder case would again pop open. Not only would the momentum of the investigation reassert itself but this time the entire operation would become something of an all-Philadelphia project.

Senator Richard S. Schweiker of Montgomery County was a member of Senator Frank Church's Senate Intelligence Committee. He had always been a skeptic and a critic of the Warren Commission's performance, and the volumes of testimony and battalions of witnesses that were now startling the Church Committee with revelations of CIA and FBI shenanigans in the wake of Watergate would reawaken in the liberal Republican from Pennsylvania

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Dave Marston, now the U.S. Attorney here, recalls his stint as a Kennedy killing expert. "There'd been stories of CIA attempts against Castro's life floating around Capitol Hill, and suddenly Schweiker was in a position to get to the bottom of it."

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all those old fears and suspicions concerning the credibility of the Warren Commission Report.

Dave Marston, currently the tough, young U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania, was a special counsel on Schweiker's staff back then. He would soon become the latest in a long line of Philadelphians to be ensnared by the tantalizing Kennedy mystery: "When Schweiker was on Church's Intelligence Committee, we got wind of the CIA's activities with the Cuban exiles and with assassination plots against Castro.

"For years, there'd been stories and even lists of CIA attempts against Castro's life floating around Capitol Hill and suddenly Schweiker found himself in a position to get to the bottom of it."

Schweiker persuaded the Committee Chairman, Frank Church, to let him set up his own select subcommittee to concentrate exclusively on the performance of the intelligence community relative to the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Inevitably, this Schweiker investigation led to the Cuban-CIA connection.

He set Dave Marston up as a one-man assassination think-tank and clearing-house for all the new material that was available but had been overlooked for the past ten years. The deeper they delved into the past, the more apparent it became to Marston and the handful of people working with him that the "Murder Incorporated in the Caribbean" which the CIA had set

up was somehow connected to Kennedy's own death. They learned of the violence of the anti-Castro Cubans; of their hatred for Kennedy over what they considered to be the Bay of Pigs treachery on his part for not coming to their rescue at the last minute with U.S. ships and planes; and of Kennedy's own anger at the CIA for conning him into believing that their operation against Castro could have ever succeeded.

It also soon became apparent that Schweiker's little committee would need a leg man in Miami where all the leads seemed to point. Dave Newhall, Schweiker's administrative assistant, was a former newspaper reporter from Philadelphia who had known Gaeton Fonzi, and who had been impressed with the investigative reporter's earlier articles questioning the findings of the Warren Commission Report. And best of all, Fonzi was now living in Miami.

They contacted Fonzi, asked him to check out a few things, were impressed by his typically competent performance and hired him as their field investigator. And so another Philadelphian would resurface in the reopening of the Kennedy case.

Meanwhile, back on Capitol Hill, Schweiker was discovering a whole new area of culpability on the part of the intelligence community concerning the nightmare in Dallas. He would later officially express it in a headline-making report which he summarized in this way:

"This Committee documents the failures of the U.S. intelligence establishment in their investigation of President Kennedy's assassination and their cover-up to the Warren Commission.

"With virtually no investigators of its own, the Warren Commission relied almost exclusively on information developed by existing investigative agencies—primarily the FBI and CIA. . . .

"The tragedy of Dallas became a gigantic jigsaw puzzle. The Warren Commission put some pieces together—but critics claim that pieces were forced together into a picture that didn't make sense. Our report documents, for the first time, that the Warren Commission—and most intelligence officials who worked with it—did not have all the pieces. A handful of senior intelligence officials held back key pieces, both from their own investigators and from the Commission. . . .

"In short, the non-disclosures and investigative failures—intentional and otherwise—established that the Warren Commission was deprived of such vital pieces that there is no longer any rea-

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son to have faith in its picture of the Kennedy assassination . . . ."

Schweiker had promised reporters that by the time his committee had finished, "the Warren Commission would collapse like a house of cards." Schweiker has kept his promise.

Schweiker's people discovered that Oswald's CIA connections, which were very strong, had never been fully investigated; that his Cuban involvement had been misunderstood; that the CIA and FBI officials who worked as investigators for the Warren Commission had themselves been unaware of anti-Castro assassination teams; and that some kind of widespread conspiracy to murder Jack Kennedy was all but self-evident.

Schweiker's people had only spent months on their investigation; had a budget of less than \$100,000; and had used only one full-time field investigator, yet they had managed to produce what Bud Fensterwald, the eminent Kennedy assassination researcher, would call "the most significant documents on the case to emerge in 13 years."

But there were a lot of loose ends. Schweiker, Marston and their staff came up with several possible scenarios:

- Kennedy could have been killed by Castro in retaliation for CIA assassination attempts against the Cuban leader, as the CIA itself has hinted.

- Kennedy could have been killed by angry anti-Castro Cuban exiles who blamed him for the failure of their invasion at the Bay of Pigs, and who hoped that his death would precipitate a war with Cuba, particularly if it were blamed on a known defector to the Communists, Lee Harvey Oswald, with alleged sympathies for Castro.

- Kennedy could have been killed as a result of some much larger conspiracy involving the CIA itself, the Cuban exiles and other elements within the U.S. government.

Then, there was the problem of the Mafia. The CIA had recruited some of the most notorious hit men and assassins in the mob to murder Castro. Their testimony before Schweiker's Senate Committee had clearly demonstrated that the mob, too, had been angry with Kennedy for his crackdowns on the Teamsters and other organized crime activity, and that a number of Mafia Dons would have been only too happy to see the President dead.

This tended to confuse the investigation still further, throwing new suspicion on an even more bizarre CIA-Cuban-exile-Mafia conspiracy to kill Jack Kennedy. The plot really thickened when two of the Schweiker Committee's most informative witnesses

and most reliable living links between the CIA and the Mafia, Sam Giancana of Chicago and John Roselli of Miami were brutally executed just before, in Giancana's case, and just after, in Roselli's case, their closed-door testimony.

Those two corpses would join Jack Kennedy's, as well as over 20 others, in the escalating body count of victims somehow associated with that deadly crossfire in Dallas on November 22nd, 1963.

What had once been a relatively simple, essentially academic exercise in refuting Arlen Specter's "single-bullet theory" and in following up the kinds of evidence that William T. Coleman's conspiracy staff on the Warren Commission had allowed to remain suppressed, had suddenly become, through Schweiker's efforts, a whole new ball game.

The Warren Commission had, once and for all, been proved fraudulent and the product of a vast cover-up. Now the questions became "Who was behind the conspiracy to kill Kennedy?" and "Who had engineered the Warren Commission cover-up?"

After more than a dozen years, assassination investigators now found themselves practically back at the starting point.

Schweiker had destroyed the credibility of the Warren Commission all right, but in the process he had also opened up new chilling areas of inquiry that would have seemed preposterous only a few years before.

### Gaeton Fonzi's Findings

The leads that Gaeton Fonzi pursued for the Schweiker Senate Committee immersed him even more deeply into the quagmire of Cuban exile politics.

Not only did he come up with alleged participants in CIA-sponsored assassination attempts against Castro that Schweiker's Committee had been unable to corroborate through existing CIA records, but he also found an informant who could reliably place Lee Harvey Oswald at the center of such conspiracies. In fact, according to Fonzi's ever-developing file on Oswald's CIA connection, the alleged murderer of Jack Kennedy was himself an apparent CIA agent.

He also learned of another probable actor in the conspiracy, identified only as Mr. Bishop—who, his informants swore, was another government agent whose specialty was assassination and whose association with Oswald was well-known.

To ascertain the identity of this missing link, of this Mr. Bishop, Fonzi even went so far as to have an old friend on the Philadelphia police force put to-



gether a likeness of Bishop, based upon his informant's description.

But always, despite the Cuban connection and despite the CIA links, Fonzi was drawn to the inevitable question of just who Lee Harvey Oswald really had been and for whom he had been working.

The answer to all this had to lie in Dallas, back where it had begun; back where Lee Harvey Oswald had spent the last months and weeks of his strange, pre-assassination life.

Based on the material that Fonzi had unearthed for the Senate Subcommittee, Richard Schweiker would tell *Philadelphia Magazine* in his stern, reserved, down-to-earth way that "Gaeton Fonzi is unquestionably the single most qualified investigator currently at work who is capable of solving the JFK assassination mystery."

### **Richard Sprague and the House Select Committee**

The Schweiker Committee's work was finished by March of 1976 and for the next six months its findings would disturb the rest of the Congress, the American people and the suddenly resuscitated army of assassination investigators and researchers.

Many members of the House of Representatives in particular would demand a bigger, costlier, more far-reaching inquest into the new areas unearthed by Schweiker, Marston and Fonzi, before the committee's mandate and funding ran out.

There was opposition, to be sure, from congressmen loyal to the intelligence community; from the Kennedy family who steadfastly opposed any reopening of the case; and finally from the intelligence agencies themselves who seemingly had the most to lose from any new probe.

But eventually, in September 1976, the House decided to take up where their colleagues in the Senate had left off. The single concession they made at the outset was to the Congressional Black Caucus which demanded that inquiry into the Kennedy case had to be accompanied by an equal effort into the Martin Luther King affair.

And so the House Select Committee on Assassinations was formed amid many promises and predictions that this time the case would finally be closed.

As Special Counsel they hired Philadelphia's Richard A. Sprague who had, incidentally, served under DA Arlen Specter as first assistant.

Thomas Downing, a Democrat from Virginia, had been one of the motive forces behind the House effort, largely because his son, as assassination buff,

## Kennedy

had been filling his father's head for years with tales of conspiracies and multiple assassins.

But Downing, the first chairman of the committee, was retiring and his place, through the House's sacrosanct seniority rule, would be taken by another Democrat, Henry Gonzalez of Texas.

Gonzalez was a curious choice. He'd been in the motorcade three cars behind Jack Kennedy the day the President had been assassinated, and he had also removed Texas Governor John Connally's personal effects from Parkland Hospital in the aftermath of the shooting. He was known around the Congress as a hawk on the assassination investigation, firmly believing that Kennedy's death had been a neat, clean CIA hit.

Sprague, the prosecutorial prima donna of Philadelphia, came roaring in demanding—not asking—but *ordering* the Congress of the United States to give him a gigantic \$13 million budget over two years, a 170-man staff, enough electronic gadgetry and hardware to open his own CIA, a free hand in the hiring of all personnel and carte-blanche autonomy to run his embryonic empire any way that he saw fit. Anything less, Sprague told them, would be too little, too late.

This issuing of ultimatums to Congress was bad enough. But Sprague also had a grating habit of telling the press things like "congressmen are *not* evidence. Therefore, Congress is irrelevant."

Sprague had the right idea—run the investigation cleanly, with outside detectives and lawyers, not with the same Capitol Hill spooks and spys who had been in on the Warren Commission cover-up originally.

But the congressmen, for their part, saw in Sprague a potential threat to them all—a mere staff member, who in the words of Speaker Tip O'Neill "was acting like a congressman" himself. As one observer put it, "There are only congressmen and clerks down here and some of those clerks just happen to have a title, Special Counsel."

Before long, both sides had lost sight of the real issue and the newspapers, especially *The New York Times*, were filled with critical, daily, round-by-round, blow-by-blow accounts of the arrogant Sprague versus the even more arrogant Gonzalez.

At one point, after Chairman Gonzalez and Special Counsel Sprague had really locked horns, the Chairman actually fired Sprague and later angrily commented, "I know a rattlesnake when I see one."

At first the House Select Committee seemed appalled by Gonzalez's erratic

behavior and backed Sprague to the hilt, but this only called down upon themselves the wrath, not only of Gonzalez but of the rest of the House as well. It seemed that a dangerous precedent was about to be set here—in which a congressman was coming out on the short end of a battle with a staff member—and JFK assassination or not, such precedents could *not* be tolerated.

Picking a strategic moment, Gonzalez resigned as chairman of the Committee, called Sprague "a deceitful scoundrel" on

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Sprague had the right idea—investigate with outside detectives and lawyers, not the same Capitol Hill spooks and spies who had been in on the Warren Commission cover-up originally.

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the floor of the House, and abruptly winged his way back to Texas.

That was the eventful day, March 30th, 1977, when more than the "Sprague Committee"—as it had become known, much to the chagrin of the congressmen—would die.

Al Lewis, the Lebanon County prosecutor whom Sprague had brought down with him to run interference against the scheming representatives, explained what happened next:

"We were sitting in Dick Sprague's office one night in the old FBI warehouse where they had us set up, and we knew it was near the end. Like Sprague said, Gonzalez had gone berserk; the whole investigation had become a laughingstock—they'd shut off our phones at one point, taken away our stationery, cut our pay and even changed the locks on our doors on Gonzalez's orders—and we were waiting any minute for the ax to fall.

"After Gonzalez resigned, the new chairman was Louis Stokes from Ohio, and he told Sprague that he would have to meet informally with the committee that night. Sprague was just getting ready to put his coat on and walk over to see them when he said to me, 'I'll give you odds they ask for my resignation tonight, too, so they can start with a clean slate.'

"I told him I thought he was crazy; that the investigation would fall apart without him—that we'd probably *never* find out what happened to Kennedy,

but deep down I knew it was coming, too.

"Just then, the phone rang and it was Gaeton Fonzi calling from Florida. He talked to Dick and told him that our secret witness, a guy we had really been counting on—had blown his brains out at 2:21 that afternoon."

Sprague pulled his coat off, said the congressmen would have to wait, and began sorting out, with Fonzi, what had happened in Miami.

### **The Baron Bows Out**

Fonzi, whom Sprague also knew from his days in Philadelphia, and who had come with Senator Schweiker's and Dave Marston's glowing recommendations, had also been retained as a field investigator by the House Select Committee.

While Sprague and Gonzalez had been battling in Washington, Fonzi had been doggedly running down leads in the field. At a temporary dead end with Oswald's Cuban connections, he decided to take a stab at the Dallas background.

Almost a month before, the name of Baron George De Mohrenschildt had popped up prominently again due to the revelations of a Dutch journalist. The writer claimed that De Mohrenschildt was the key to the assassination because of his friendship with Oswald, that he knew about the conspiracy to murder Jack Kennedy "from A to Z," and that somehow a national cartel of petroleum and oil millionaires had been involved in the plot.

None of this information had come as any surprise to Fonzi—especially the part about De Mohrenschildt's being a key to the Oswald mystery.

With all this in mind, Fonzi tracked Baron De Mohrenschildt down to a mansion near Palm Beach, Florida, where he was staying with friends.

On Tuesday, March 29th, 1977, Fonzi spoke with De Mohrenschildt's daughter who was staying with her father and explained that he wanted to talk to the Baron about Oswald and the assassination, and that he would probably be subpoenaed to testify before the House Select Committee.

Fonzi was turned away, but a little while later he managed to contact the Baron by phone. He stated the situation once again, and told the Baron of his importance to the investigation.

No one knows what was really said in that conversation because Fonzi is under a seal of silence from the congressional committee for which he still works.

But less than an hour after that call, Baron George De Mohrenschildt—Lee Harvey Oswald's friend and patron, the man who had introduced the Oswalds

to the Paines, the man who had played such an important role in the initial tenuous Philadelphia connection to the JFK assassination—put the barrel of a .20 gauge shotgun into his mouth and committed suicide.

And so there would be still one more corpse to add to that ever-increasing body count of victims whose fate had somehow already been decided on that grim day in Dallas so many years before.

In the aftermath of the De Mohrenschildt suicide and the Sprague debacle, the House's Assassination Investigation somehow managed to continue—turning up new shreds of evidence, new clues to be fitted in.

Sprague was forced to resign, and a new expert was tapped to take his place—this time a Mafia-hunter from Cornell named Robert Blakey.

Bob Edgar, a Democratic congressman from Delaware County, is still on board as the only local member of the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

At one point during the early Sprague era, Edgar privately pushed for publicity gimmicks to win over the public, get the Congress to provide funding, and to blunt some of the friction caused by Sprague's hard edges.

But the secret PR campaign blew up in Edgar's face when the newspapers revealed the details of the congressman's strategy.

Still, Edgar remains doggedly optimistic about finding answers.

He pores over the committee's findings for hours—according to his staff—making notes, drawing conclusions and ultimately, perhaps, losing himself as well, in the seductive mystery of the JFK assassination. Then Edgar dutifully seals away everything relating to the committee's business in a large floor safe he keeps in his Washington office for just that purpose. Secrecy and a fear of leaks to the press—a real problem in the past—have become the committee's two obsessions.

Except for Gaeton Fonzi, the active Philadelphia participants in the investigation have drifted away, demoralized by Sprague's ambush and doubtful of any real conclusions ever being reached. The focus of the investigation under Blakey seems to have remained much the same as the thrust of the Schweiker Senate probe—zeroing-in on Lee Harvey Oswald and his Cuban-CIA connection.

But what also remains are the same haunting words of Haverford's Josiah Thompson, that there will always exist "a black box of hidden knowledge concerning Jack Kennedy's murder which we may never be able to penetrate." ■ ■